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FM AMEMBASSY HARARE
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5171
INFO RUCNSAD/SOUTHERN AF DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY COLLECTIVE
RUEHAR/AMEMBASSY ACCRA 3183
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RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
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C O N F I D E N T I A L HARARE 000929

SIPDIS

AF/S FOR B. WALCH
DRL FOR N. WILETT
ADDIS ABABA FOR USAU
NSC FOR M. GAVIN
STATE PASS TO USAID FOR J. HARMON AND L. DOBBINS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/02/2019

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SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR MEETS ZIM FOREIGN MINISTER; CREDENTIALS
POSTPONED

Classified By: Ambassador Charles A. Ray for reasons 1.4 (b) & (d).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: On December 2, following a call on Zimbabwe's Chief of Presidential Protocol Munyaradzi Kajese, Ambassador presented copies of letters of credence and recall to Foreign Minister Simbarashe Mumbengegwi. Presentation of credentials to President Mugabe has been postponed to December 10. Both meetings with Zimbabwean officials were cordial, although the Zimbabweans lamented U.S. sanctions policy and Ambassador noted U.S. commitment to rule of law and human rights. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) On December 2, Ambassador met with Chief of Presidential Protocol Ambassador Munyaradzi Kajese and Minister of Foreign Affairs Simbarashe Mumbengegwi in preparation for presentation of credentials to President Mugabe. Both Zimbabwean officials welcomed Ambassador Ray to Zimbabwe and expressed the hope that he would usher in an era of improved relations. Their common script also urged the Ambassador to travel around Zimbabwe and get to know the Zimbabwean people so that he could form his own opinions. They said he would see for himself how U.S. sanctions are negatively affecting ordinary Zimbabweans, including those in rural areas, and they hoped, having seen this, the Ambassador would work to eliminate sanctions. Mumbengegwi noted that Zimbabwe welcomed President Obama's commitment to engage, rather than isolate, those with whom the USG disagrees, but lamented that this policy seems to apply everywhere except Zimbabwe. In Zimbabwe, he argued, the existence of a hung Parliament in which ZANU-PF and MDC-T had equal voting strength had led the Zimbabwean people to choose to create an inclusive government; the USG should respect this choice. (COMMENT: This revisionist interpretation ignored the role of Zimbabwe's discredited presidential election in the decision to form an inclusive government. END COMMENT.) Kajese told the Ambassador that unanticipated developments forced postponement of his presentation of credentials from December 3 to December 10.

¶3. (C) The Ambassador told both interlocutors that he too hoped his tour in Zimbabwe would bring improved relations. Zimbabwe was once a jewel in the crown of Africa, and he was confident all Zimbabweans would agree it is desirable to work together to restore Zimbabwe's former social and economic achievements. He said that he appreciated the warm welcome

he had received to date, but also expressed dismay at an incident on November 28 in which his official vehicle was stopped and detained for over an hour by police who wished to search it. Neither official had been aware of the incident and both regretted it and assured the Ambassador it was not reflective of policy. (NOTE: The Embassy sent a Diplomatic Note protesting the incident and requesting an investigation. END NOTE.) The Ambassador stressed that he looked forward to talking with and listening to representatives of all points of view in Zimbabwe; while we would not always agree, disagreement did not mean disengagement. The Ambassador noted that President Obama had stressed Africa's responsibility for its own future, and the Ambassador Qresponsibility for its own future, and the Ambassador promised that the USG would cooperate with all those who support the rule of law and respect human rights to help make Zimbabwe's future bright. ForMin Mumbengegwi responded by expressing the hope that this message did not mean that the Ambassador intended to interfere in Zimbabwe's internal politics. The Ambassador stressed the USG's commitment to work with all those who play by the rules and Mumbengegwi noted that there are rules for diplomats to follow as well. (COMMENT: While the script was familiar, the tone remained cordial, in sharp contrast to former Ambassador McGee's initial courtesy call, during which Mumbengegwi threatened to expel McGee unless he respected the principle of noninterference. END COMMENT.)

RAY